

Sunday School

TEMPERANCE LESSON.

September 26, 1909. 1 Cor. 10:23-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."—Romans 15:2.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—1 Cor. 10:23-33. Th.—1 Peter 5:1-11.
T.—1 Cor. 9:19-27. F.—Titus 2:6-15.
W.—1 Cor. 8. S.—Rom. 15:1-7.
S.—Eph. 6:1-10.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

Principles of Christian Conduct—

Seek the good of others, vs. 23, 24.
Do not misuse liberty, vs. 25-30.
Do all to the glory of God, vs. 31.
Win men to save them, vs. 32, 33.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 74. What is required in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.

LESSONS COMMENTS.

Introductory.—Corinth was a city of the first importance. It was a center of political, social and intellectual influence in Greece. Its commercial power extended to other cities and nations. Corinth stood for cultivated heathenism. It has been called "The Star of Hellas." "Gallio, the brother of Seneca, was proconsul during Paul's first visit there." The inhabitants of the city were Greeks, Romans and Jews. Paul visited Corinth three times and from that place wrote his great epistle to the Romans. He also addressed two letters from Philippi to the Christians in that city. Dr. Hodge thinks that the majority of the converts to Christianity were probably Greek, as distinguished from Jews, and that the characteristics of the Greeks, who were speculative, pleasure-loving, vain and divisive in spirit, were illustrated in the members of the Corinthian Church. Meyer says, that it was "the most important church in Greece and the mother-church of the province, although only a few of the upper classes embraced the faith." Paul wrote to unify the church; to instruct them in the essentials of religion; to correct abuses; to establish them in the faith and to purify the church by judicious discipline. In this particular passage; true, scriptural temperance is inculcated, which consists in a complete control of all the appetites of the body and the passions of the soul. These principles lie at the foundation of Christian liberty in its relations to our fellowmen.

Comment.—Following the topical outline, it is worthy of remark that verses 23 and 24 teach us that unselfishness lies at the basis of all Christian conduct. All that Christ did and suffered, He did and suffered for others. His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession contemplated the benefit of others; next to the glory of God. The same spirit is in every true Christian. As far as in him lies, it is his duty to imitate Christ. This is the way Paul acted. It was lawful for him to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols; but if it offended the conscience of some weak Christian, he would abstain from it. "We should be governed in this matter by a regard to the good of others, and to our own edification." The word "wealth" in verse 24 is the same as the old English word "weal," or "welfare." It had this meaning in 16:11, when the Bible was translated; but is now obsolete. In matters indifferent, we are to waive our rights for the welfare of others.

It would be right to buy at the "shambles," or meat market, whatever was exposed for sale, without inquiring whether or not the meat had been offered in sacrifice to idols. No one should have conscientious scruples about the matter. An idol is nothing in the world. God has made the world and furnished it for man's benefit. Animals, fruits, vegetables, were created for us to richly enjoy within the limitations of temperance. The sacred writer then illustrates his meaning more fully by saying that if a believer should be invited to a feast and should accept the invitation, he should partake

of whatever provisions should be on the table without asking any questions through prurient curiosity. But should some one at the table inform the other guests that the meat had been offered in sacrifice to idols, it would be their duty not to partake of it, lest they should wound the weak conscience of the person who gave the information. "The most enlightened man of his whole generation was the most yielding and conciliatory in all matters of indifference." No man has a right to make any use of his liberty in these matters that will be a hindrance to the weak in the faith. "Why should I be blamed for what I receive with thanksgiving?" Hodge. "The only motive for the abstinence, therefore, is the sparing of the conscience of others, not the danger to one's own." Meyer. "Why should I give occasion by the rash use of my liberty that another should condemn it?" Estius, in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. "They who do whatever is lawful, will soon glide into that which is unlawful." In verse 31, the apostle writes one of his grand generalizations that forms the starting point of the Shorter Catechism. The glory of God is the principal purpose of our creation, preservation and redemption, and in things little or large that purpose should be kept chiefly in view. Anything in business or pleasure that is inconsistent with that end should be omitted. The Christian should so conduct himself as a witness of Jesus on earth that he would not be a stumbling block to others; but on the other hand, by lip and life, attract others to Christ that God may be honored. Matt. 5:16. Paul felt no hesitation in referring to his own conduct as an illustration of the principles he taught. His love and liberty were as broad as truth; and he felt under obligation to Jews, Gentiles and Christians. He endeavored to win the souls of all to whom he ministered without regard to his own advantage. In matters of indifference he adapted himself to all to save them; but he "never compromised any truth or sanctioned any error." Christian charity has its basis in the truth. 1 Cor. 13:6.

Doctrinal and Practical.—(1) Selfishness is the mother of most sins; and the more vital godliness one has, the less selfish he is in the pulpit, Sunday-school, home, business and society. The Earl of Shaftesbury said: "Oh, I can't die and leave this world with all its sorrows in it! I want to stay and help." But selfishness must not be mistaken for self love. Self-love is an instinctive principle of our nature and God has made it the rule by which we are to measure our love to our neighbors. It is therefore right. (2) The principle of self-denial for the sake of others is of priceless value. Self-indulgence is one of the sins of the American people. We do not have any occasion to offend the weak consciences of other Christians by eating meat offered to idols; but we have constantly opportunities to apply the principle of Christian liberty. Many things may not be wrong in themselves; but if they should be obstacles in the way of others, we should abstain from them. We have examples in card playing, dancing, wine-drinking and theater-going. Judging by the conduct of many professed Christians in these and other particulars, one could not decide whether they are the servants of Christ or the devil. 1 John 2:15. (3) Intemperance is the great curse of the country. A change of heart is the best solution of the temperance question. Every moderate drinker or drunkard affects others. Before he committed suicide recently in a hotel in New York, a drunkard left the following paper, headed: "My Last Will and Testament."

"I leave to society a ruined character. I leave to my father and mother as much misery as, in their feeble state, they can bear. I leave to my brothers and sisters the memory of a mis-spent life. I leave to my wife a broken heart and demented mind, and to my children the memory that their father fills a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell."

E. P. Davis.

Blessed is the blunder who profits by having his blunders kindly pointed out to him.

Then deem it not an idle thing

A pleasant word to speak;

The face you wear, the thought you bring,

A heart may heal or break.

—John G. Whittier.